



The 2008-2009 Budget

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, June 23, 2008

City Hall Diary

The city council spent 12 hours on "Budget Tuesday" last week. Here are three of the topics we covered.

Budget:

It was the end of a long budget process and I lived through it. We had tough choices to make. San Jose is involved in many things—some questionable and others necessary. I think we need to consider starting fresh with a clean slate by making "core" city services—sewer, public safety and land use—our first priorities.

We need to fully fund these core services first and then move on from there to roads, libraries, attorneys, and accounting (collect revenues/pay bills), followed by code enforcement, parks and community/senior centers. Perhaps San Jose should consider dropping things that are not core, such as taxpayer subsidized golf.

I know that folks might think I am "Mr. No Fun" because I am upfront about the fact that there are tradeoffs we have to make. Casual fiscal responsibility, when it's convenient, does not cut it. We must have a sober discussion on tradeoffs. Why not have high ratings for our core services rather than being average at many things?

Traffic Calming:

Last year I chaired the traffic calming meetings in an effort to gather community feedback on how best to update San Jose's policy. We had a meeting in each council district, shared the policy twice at the Transportation and Environment Committee, and held a final community meeting before the council unanimously passed the new policy last Tuesday. Two of the important changes to the policy are partnering with schools and neighborhoods adjacent to schools in an effort to make the streets in these areas safer, and allowing private funding for traffic calming devices. The entire policy was revamped and I encourage you to check it out.

Inclusionary Housing:

Wordsmithing was at its best when “inclusionary” housing was discussed last week. I was starting to get dizzy with the constant back and forth about literally one word. I have given this issue considerable thought and, as a result, it is not one I support the way it is presented today. In the end, I want what is best for San Jose and its residents. I don’t believe building housing on every parcel is in anyone’s best interest, nor do I think raising the prices for first-time home buyers to subsidize others that earn less money is fair either. San Jose has done more than its fair share for both market rate housing and affordable housing. I am not alone. Councilmember Pyle did a good job by offering an alternative. I supported her, along with my colleagues Cortese and Constant.

San Jose’s structural deficit isn’t over yet, so stay tuned as this week’s council meeting should also be a long one.

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